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ABSTRACT

The use of metaphors to frame problems and gain insight into educational phenomena has received little attention in the literature. This study shows that principals' use of metaphoric language to discuss their work environment and instructional leadership roles is a valid means of understanding school administrator behavior. The study focused on the responses of two junior high principals in "low achievement" schools to a districtwide school improvement initiative stressing instructional leadership. The results, along with an extensive literature review of school effectiveness, leadership theory, and organizational theory, provided a framework for creating a typology of principals' instructional leadership practices. Using an ethnographic approach, action research interviews were conducted with the principals. During these interviews, principals became "informants" and "reflective practitioners" facilitating a shared learning process between practitioners and researchers. Participants' instructional leadership behaviors were related to contextual variables, educational background, and ability to reflect-in-action. Results imply that ethnography, when used with action research in school improvement projects, produces readily usable data contributing to experiential learning. Analyzing metaphoric language contributes to understanding both projects and individuals. Included are 2 figures and 17 references. (MLH)

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Ethnography and School Improvement Research: Analyzing Metaphoric Language In The Interpretation of Instructional Leadership

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH: METAPHORIC LANGUAGE AND THE INTERPRETATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Introduction

School effectiveness research and the development of school improvement projects have become nearly commonplace on America's public education agenda. The literature on school effects (Good & Brophy, 1986); project implementation (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978); and successful urban schools (Edmonds, 1979) has in part implicitly sought to invalidate the salient views and implications of the Coleman, et. al., (1966) report.

Consistent throughout the literature has been the significance of the principal's role. While there are competing views on the extent of the importance to be attributed to school principals' behaviors (see e.g., Clark & Lotto, 1984; Gersten, et. al., 1982; Hannay & Stevens, 1984; Newberg & Glatthorn, 1984), a synthesis of the research literature suggests that instructional leadership practices are paramount to school effectiveness, and to the successful implementation of improvement projects (Pugh, 1986).

This study of a school improvement project in a major urban public school system focused on two junior high school principals. Eighteen elementary school principals were also involved in the school district's improvement project, and data were collected at the elementary schools in order to provide a contextual perspective of the two junior high

school principals. One of the findings that grew out of this study was that the metaphoric language of school principals suggests a valid means of understanding their behavior.

The use of metaphors to frame problems (Schon, 1979; 1983), and/or to gain insight into a given phenomenon related to education has received limited treatment in the literature. Yet, consistent with the ethnographer's linguistic emphasis, spoken metaphors by school administrators are one way to understand and describe what takes place in schools.

In part, as an attempt to address the need for "descriptive process data" in education (Good & Brophy, 1986), and to illustrate the usefulness of metaphoric depictions (Ortony, 1979), this study suggests that valuable insights into the school lives of principals are possible. Arriving at such a perspective requires that researchers document and analyze descriptive spoken words, i.e., metaphors.

Methodology of the Study

This study began with the explicit purpose of exploring the responses of two junior high school principals to a central office school improvement initiative. The concept of instructional leadership practices was the focus of the research. After utilizing action research methodology, based on an ethnographic perspective to gather data, additional data were derived from interviews with each school

principal. In most cases the interviews lasted 30-60 minutes. The interviews occurred during nine months of participatory-observations by the researcher. More than 300 pages of transcripts comprised the refined raw data. The voluminous nature of the data presented an immediate problem of how to analyze and synthesize it.

In order to present a synthesized discussion of the interview data, the theoretical concepts of Spradley (1979), and Glaser & Strauss (1980), were applied. Utilizing the theoretical frames of domain analysis (Spradley), and grounded-based theory development (Glaser & Strauss), the data were used to develop a typology (see figure 2, p. 27; Pugh, 1986). The theoretical construct of Argyris and Schon (1974), which focuses on espoused theories *and* theories-in-use, was adopted as an added frame for data analysis. Within the typology of principals' instructional leadership practices is the category "Expressed Imagery-Metaphoric Depictions". The focus of this paper is an analysis of the principals' unsolicited use of metaphors while discussing school improvement and instructional leadership.

The data were derived from the following sources: (1) central office assessment findings; and (2) observations and interviews conducted while the researcher participated in the assessment process during active involvement in the schools between November 1984 and June 1985. The aforementioned data were used to structure reliable events (EVT's), from which were developed general interview questions (IQ's); instructional leadership-related questions (ILQ's); and staff development questions (SDQ's). The principals' responses to the questions comprise the findings.

Interpretive Metaphoric Findings

The two junior high school principals in this study participated in a districtwide school improvement project which began in 1984. The project was designed to assist selected low achieving schools in replicating the essential elements of successful schools: school climate conducive to learning; schoolwide emphasis on basic skills; a system of clear instructional objectives for monitoring and assessing students' performances; and, a principal who is a strong programmatic leader and who sets high standards, communicates high expectations, frequently observes classrooms, and creates incentives for learning. Another important component of the program is extensive administrative, teacher, and parent training to develop the necessary support infrastructure. All participating schools follow a standard model reflecting the above emphasis which includes: a School Improvement Council, parent scholars, use of the mandated District curriculum, and development of a positive self-image among students.

Case Study A: Mr. Robert Stern, Principal, Truman Junior High School

Beginning with the background data on Mr. Robert Stern, principal of Truman Junior High School (pseudonym), an image emerged of a man who believed in his ability to be an instructional leader. However, the impact of the school environment on his work and behaviors greatly reduced his potential capacity to perform instructional leadership practices. Mr. Stern moved up the ranks of the teaching profession. He went from

being an exceptional classroom teacher to a vice principal noted for his problem-solving capacity. Mr. Stern was quick to point out that he knew he could depend on himself. He acknowledged that his reactive behaviors needed to be changed to be more proactive. The richness of Mr. Stern's metaphoric language, and his wavering interpretations in discussions with the researcher, provided insight into his persona, personality, thinking and active behaviors as principal at Truman Junior High School.

A typical day documentation suggested that Mr. Stern planned his days, and that he did perform some instructional leadership practices. His espoused views tended to match his theory-in-use. His imaginal expressions also illustrated his understanding of problems in the setting, and entailed the realization that "not enough" was being done by him and others. Mr. Stern suggested that he was an instructional leader with limitations imposed on his effectiveness. The environment's impact preempted the effectiveness of Mr. Stern's leadership.

Bob Stern suggested that his leadership behaviors were minimized because "others don't understand my circumstances." For Mr. Stern, stress was not a concern because he was able to cope with stress producing situations. His understanding of the "realities" of the job provided him with a capacity to cope with job stress. The data suggest that Mr. Stern's adjustments to, and acceptance of, some faculty practices and negative student behaviors may have operated to minimize his perception of stress impacting upon him.

The professional development and learning experiences (staff development) provided by the central office did not increase the principal's knowledge. Mr. Stern suggested that staff development allowed him to become "focused", and provided him with a valuable support group of other principals. According to Mr. Stern, a principal's support group, and staff development for principals were atypical experiences in the school district.

Mr. Stern suggested that he does not often reflect-in-action while working. He suggested that in a problem atmosphere such as Truman Junior High School, he was doing the best he could. Utilizing imagery in his language while responding to some questions, Mr. Stern pointed out that his "days are crazy;" "brush fires;" "crunch items" are a normal feature of the school climate. According to Mr. Stern, wearing a "gorilla suit" (a demanding-tough-projected image) was necessary at times. However, he saw his role as producing a calming influence on the school; he saw himself as "oil on water."

Mr. Stern was highly rated by teachers as an instructional facilitator. In light of his problem-solving background as a vice principal, and his reactive behavioral disposition, Mr. Stern's facilitative role made sense. However, the limitations on his ability to delegate responsibilities made his job demanding. Bob Stern's problems and incapacity to function as an instructional leader were exacerbated by his inability to fully utilize his vice principals to carry out prescribed assignments.

Images: Expressed Metaphors/Generative Metaphors

The images expressed by Bob Stern to reveal his viewpoints on the problems and situations associated with his role as principal provide insight into his behavior. At times, during the interview process, Mr. Stern posited that he believed in Mark Hopkins' view of education. Schlechty and Joslin (1984) discuss such a view as, "the school as a log in a pastoral setting with Mark Hopkins on one end and the motivated or able student on the other end" (p. 156). The authors conclude that "the pastoral scene suggested by the Mark Hopkins metaphor perhaps never existed even in great universities, but if it did, it no longer does" (p. 169).

Perhaps, Mr. Stern's belief in the Mark Hopkins imagery suggests a nostalgic and unrealistic view of learning. In interview session nine, Mr. Stern's description of the Truman Junior High School setting was illustrated in the following dialogue: [1]

EVENT (EVT): You mentioned the 'fullness of the job' as suggested by your view that 'days were always crazy here.'

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[1] In this section the abbreviation PR (Principal's Response) is used to designate the conversations between the Researcher and school principals. The following abbreviations are also used, EVENT (based on ethnographic observations and survey data) - EVT; Instructional Leadership Question (based on data that apply to instructional leadership practices) - ILQ. Other than the PR (Principal's Response) coding, the variety of abbreviations in the case studies represent the nature of the questions and dialogue spoken by the Researcher.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP QUESTION (ILQ): Does such a situation cause you frustration, and undue stress? (Or, stress in general?)

PRINCIPAL'S RESPONSE (PR): No, I'm used to it. I have a thick skin. Nothing happens to me that hasn't happened before. I have a lot of work to do, and my day is over in no time. It's a full-time job; it requires a lot of time and commitment. (Interview #9)

In comparing the Truman Junior High School involvement in the school improvement project to the other junior high school (Kennedy Junior High School),Mr. Stern's dialogue suggested a significant distinction between the two. Later, while reflecting on the comparison, he compliments Kennedy Junior High while attempting to minimize the severity of his school's problems:

EVENT (EVT): You mentioned to me that in comparison to the other junior high school involved in the school improvement project, Kennedy Junior High School, that Kennedy Junior High School was like a glider plane in the water; while Truman Junior High School was a canoe.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP QUESTION (ILQ): Would you discuss what you mean by that comparison?

PR: Did I say that? It's only an analogy. It must have been in a moment of levity. Maybe it will be like the tortoise and the hare, and we'll win the race. In the context of movement, developing programs, being immediately at such a stage, I certainly don't want to take any credit away from Kennedy Junior High School and Dr. Delany, (Principal), they deserve credit.

I think that statement was in reference to becoming, immediately, a successful school. (Interview #10)

The related impact of the above imagery on Mr. Stern's sense of a vision for his school may have been captured in a prior description. When discussing a compelling vision associated with an instructional leader, Mr. Stern offered the following metaphor:

EVT: We talked about 'compelling vision' at one of the principal staff development sessions, the vision of the principal was a focus of small group discussions. It seems you are consistent in presenting the metaphor of: alligators biting at you, which makes it difficult to remember why you came into the swamp (paraphrased).

ILQ: Who do you view as the alligators? Where is the swamp?

PR: (A long silence; I repeat the statement. Mr. Stern attempts to rephrase it, but finally agrees that the above quote is an adequate paraphrasing.) What the analogy is, is that so many problems you try to resolve, you can - if you don't watch yourself, lose sight of a number of goals.

RESEARCHER: The swamp is the school, the setting?

PR: Yes.

RESEARCHER: And the alligators?

PR: All the problems; personnel, parents, etc. (Interview #10)

To gain further insight into Mr. Stern's perceived job performance limitations, the reference to "crunch items," and "brush fires" suggested by him are illustrative of his views.

EVT: I am struck by your recognition of problems on the one hand; and yet, on the other hand you often state or imply that problems will be discussed, 'after a number of things are in place.' These problems to be discussed, you term 'crunch items.'

ILQ: What is a listing of crunch items, but first define the term for me?

PR: Crunch item refers to what the kids call 'crunch time.' It's a lot of specific things, and refers to pulling them together, finalizing things; e.g., final reports, student final assemblies, class trips, etc. (Interview #3)

EVT: You often mention brush fires, particularly as if this is a typical feature within Truman Junior High School.

ILQ: What do you mean by brush fires? How typical are they of the school environment?

PR: Brush fires are similar to crunch items, but crunch items are not necessarily negative. Though, they are time consuming. Brush fires are also time consuming, and always negative.

Yes, we still have too many brush fires here.

ILQ: Do you see brush fires as directly related to limiting your instructional leadership practices?

PR: Yes, yes. (Interview #9)

To address some of the problems associated with the job of principal, Mr. Stern suggested that a personality change of sorts was necessary.

RESEARCHER: I want to talk to you about the notion of 'putting on your gorilla suit' as you termed it, to get results. What is your view of how that style seemed to work successfully during a particular meeting? (I believe that phrase means to be aggressive, hard and direct in your behaviors.)

PR: Well, it's fine to be that way sometimes. If you're that way continuously, then it loses its impact. There are times when you have to reinforce a point, a policy, or decision, that's the purpose of that. It's a different demeanor. It's a no nonsense approach. Usually it's used in a situation when you've got something to focus on; and you let the hammer come down hard. (Interview #4)

Mr. Stern's metaphoric language suggests how he feels about his influence on the school's environment when he is not wearing the "gorilla" suit.

INTERVIEW QUESTION (IQ): How do you feel about the experience here at Truman?

PR: It has reinforced my feeling that junior high school is rough. Few people understand the problems, and dynamics that must be coordinated. This is a rough school, in that the groundwork we do often goes to waste. I feel like oil on water. I cannot do it all. Yet, there is a lot to do, and it requires a great deal of work. I never have enough time to devote to the multiplicity of events and problems. These are real, whether or not I prioritize. (Interview #1)

EVT: We discussed your feelings about your experiences here. At one point you stated, 'I feel like oil on water.'

ILQ: What do you mean by that metaphor? Can you explain, and give examples of what causes you to feel that way?

PR: Well, similar to the term brush fires, there are always concerns, at the junior high school in particular. Oil on water suggests a calm and steady influence on the environment. Specifically, to have an impact on students. Kids, more-so at the junior high school level, operate on emotion rather than reason...

RESEARCHER: Your reference to oil on water had nothing to do with you and the school faculty, is that correct?

PR: Correct, it's not the faculty at all.

RESEARCHER: I thought you meant oil in water. That you feel like oil in water; which suggested to me that, metaphorically, you were unable to mix, meaning to effect certain changes within the faculty no matter how hard you tried.

PR: Maybe it's a bad metaphor, but I used it to suggest using oil to calm water. It meant calming all the activity and energy that is excessive among students. I'm glad you brought that up... I think the oil on water phrase comes from Biblical times. That's where I picked it up...it has nothing to do with mixing but was calming... that's how it's used in the Bible...that's how I use it. (Interview #7)

RESEARCHER: Prior to the school improvement initiative, it seems that the faculty did not work together in committees, etc., as you stated they presently do?

PR: That's correct. With this project, it's like having different arms; for example, the committee chairs get others to do this and that...it lets me save energy. (Interview #8)

The discussions between the researcher and Mr. Stern on metaphors, seemed at times to produce defensive verbal expressions by Mr. Stern. For example, when the researcher repeated to Mr. Stern metaphors that were expressed in previous interviews, often Mr. Stern would ask, "Did I say that?"; or, Mr. Stern attempted to rephrase his original statements. Additionally, Mr. Stern used metaphors that are commonly understood, but

he would then offer disjointed interpretations. Two illustrations of this point that stand out are (1) his insistance that he said, "I feel like oil on water." While the researcher thought he distinctly heard Bob Stern say, "I feel like oil in water."

The implication of the "oil in water" metaphor suggests that Mr. Stern, similar to oil in water, entered the Truman Junior High School environment and has thus far been unsuccessful at impacting or changing the non-progressive learning environment. Were he able to make an impact such as a massive oil spill - except in a positive sense which oil spills are not, one could suggest that he was a positive influence. However, it appears that as oil is susceptible to being gradually diluted in water until it loses many of the properties of its original liquid mass, so too have Mr. Stern's leadership and positive administrative qualities been diluted by the Truman environment. Like oil in water, Mr. Stern retained and exhibited some of his leadership qualities. The interpretation of the metaphor that suggests the capacity of water (the school environment) to break-down oil (Mr. Stern) seems to apply to Truman Junior High School.

The other metaphoric illustration that stands out and provides insight into Mr. Stern and the school environment is his initial denial and later acceptance, but light treatment of, the metaphor he used when he stated, "Kennedy Junior High School (the other school in this study) is like a glider plane in the water; while Truman Junior high is a canoe".

Mr. Stern's interpretation of the above metaphor centered on the schools' programs and the potential for "immediate success" of one over the

other. However, further analysis and interpretation of the metaphor by the researcher suggest that, in reality, Kennedy Junior High School as a glider plane in water, is powerful and fast (a progressive school). A glider plane has the support of an engine and wings that allow it to navigate a variety of environments. At Kennedy Junior High School, the principal and staff work together to address an array of problems, and to develop numerous projects and strategies. Whereas Truman Junior High School, as a canoe that is sleek and vulnerable (represented by Mr. Stern's leadership), is generally a one man operation, hand-powered and requiring great skill to maneuver (indicative of the skillfulness and positive qualities of Mr. Stern). Yet, it topples easily. Mr. Stern cannot single-handedly produce positive changes at Truman Junior High School in spite of his skillfulness. Like a canoe in turbulent (non-cooperative) water (the Truman environment), he (the principal) will undoubtably topple.

CASE STUDY B: DR. DELVIN DELANY, PRINCIPAL, KENNEDY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Beginning with the background data on Dr. Delany, principal of Kennedy Junior High (pseudonym), an image emerged of a principal who is an instructional leader. Dr. Delany's professional background, his indepth knowledge of the school effectiveness research literature, and his professionally aggressive behaviors supported the aforementioned views. Impressionistic episodes that were recorded by the researcher on Dr. Delany highlighted his expressions of a vision, high expectations, and the utilization of public relations, as well as human relations, as means to effectuate school improvement.

Dr. Delany's career experiences as a teacher, teacher-trainer, district supervisor and principal, along with his expressed commitment to educational improvement, translated into instructional leadership practices ranging from meetings with department chairs, to coordinating school programs. His espoused views on instructional leadership were in consonance with his role as principal. A typical day documentation suggested that Dr. Delany performed instructional leadership functions, and he enjoyed the role of principal as instructional leader.

Dr. Delany expressed a willingness to perform monitoring, supervising, and facilitative leadership functions. His introspective personality provided him with a sense of confidence that translated into action. For Dr. Delany, stress on the job occurred due to "tough or unpopular decisions" he made, and as a result of the risk involved in

delegating responsibility to others. His ability to cope with stress stemmed from "a positive outlook," and confidence in his ability to do his job. Although the professional development and learning experiences (staff development) provided by the district's central office did not increase his knowledge, Dr. Delany suggested that staff development allowed him to "set priorities," and reinforced his views on school improvement. The sessions gave Dr. Delany a sense of confidence in knowing that he was on "the right track" toward school improvement efforts, and that his school and staff were making progress as perceived by their interactions and dialogue with other teachers and principals. Monitoring student progress became a priority for Dr. Delany as a result of the staff development sessions.

Insight into Dr. Delany's thinking process was illuminated by the data. Dr. Delany consistently expressed a penchant for feedback and reflective-analysis on his behaviors. As an instructional leader he valued constructive feedback, while espousing humanistic and committed attitudes toward educational improvement. He emphasized trust between him and his staff, and among the staff, as an ingredient for developing a cohesive group working toward improvements in education.

Dr. Delany used very little imagery in his language while responding to the interview questions. In the few instances in which metaphoric depictions were suggested, he saw himself as an army commander dealing with problems on all fronts. His suggestion that the school staff was like "a boss on the job" implied both the competence of the teachers as well as the impact they had on increasing his competence. Dr. Delany's

view of the central office initiative as "a mechanism" fits in with his later metaphoric expressions about himself as a tank that utilized the mechanism "to keep rolling on."

Dr. Delany appeared to genuinely practice participatory-decision making with both his administrative team (vice principals), and teachers (in the School Improvement Council). He observed classes, coordinated the educational program at the school, and delegated responsibility in order to further increase his capacity to perform instructional leadership functions. Staff empowerment was a reality-based practice for Dr. Delany. It made his job easier and, according to Dr. Delany, more effective. While he may have relinquished control through delegating, and empowering others, e.g., in the School Improvement Council (SIC), he maintained influence and a sense of connectedness to those he empowered. In the case of the SIC, it was also a conduit for Dr. Delany to express his vision and expectations.

Dr. Delany's expectations were unwaveringly high for low socio-economic status (ses) students. He pointed out that he once was one (a low ses student). For his teaching staff, Dr. Delany's expectations were based on his sense of their need to experience success, and see successful projects in order to solidify and/or increase their positive expectations. Dr. Delany utilized public relations as a means of conveying his expectations, as well as for developing the school's image, and to initiate community (parents) involvement in education.

The bureaucracy's (organization-school's) negative impact on Dr. Delany's instructional leadership was minimal. The school's history suggested that programs such as student- teacher training, collaborative university research projects, and computer assisted instruction were often tried at Kennedy Junior High, and some continued to exist. The principal prior to Dr. Delany was an active individual who seemed to demand hard work from staff. Student discipline, and the overall school climate at Kennedy Junior High School seemed to be a concern that all staff desired to address along with Dr. Delany.

Images: Expressed Metaphors/Generative Metaphors

The use of images suggestively reveals the individual's attempt to define problems and situations associated with his/her environment and behavior (Schlechty and Joslin, 1984). The use of images by Dr. Delany appropriately, suggested that he had either minimized problems, or that he had realistically focused on solutions. Dr. Delany consistently looked at problems of teachers, students, and educational underachievement. His verbal and behavioral responses were: (1) to establish programs to address problematic issues; (2) to operate as an instructional leader to empower others to work with him. Dr. Delany's visionary expressions, along with his commitment to educational improvement suggested that he saw little need to mentally depict problems through the use of imagery.

The four depictions to follow illustrate parts of Dr. Delany's personality and his professional commitment to educational improvement.

In the first depiction, Dr. Delany responded to the question related to student discipline by suggesting that a principal must be like an "army commander." He goes on to suggest that similar to an army commander, one must "move on several fronts." The premise that was suggested by his response was that an instructional leader cannot allow discipline problems to define his priorities and behavior.

RESEARCHER: How do you respond to the view that when school discipline and the school climate are bad, i.e., stabbings, fighting, hat wearing, etc., the principal needs to devote all his energy to getting that in order before addressing instructional leadership issues?

Principal's Response (PR): The way I feel...is that as principal, it's like being commander of an army. You have to move in on several fronts. You have discipline, parents, staff development and professional development, special education, and numerous other issues that you must simultaneously address. (Interview #9)

The second imagery depiction by Dr. Delany illustrated his view of the School Improvement Council. The implication drawn from his view was that due to the professional competency of his staff, he must be prepared, and operate competently or else his leadership as principal would be suspect.

EVENT (EVT): We discussed the School Improvement Council (SIC), and you noted that it is like having a boss on the job. Why do you feel that way?

PR: Because, again, here's a group of people who meet on a regular basis, and they can bring up anything they want to talk about. I have to have my stuff together. They can rip me up and down. These are some very intelligent people. (Interview #9)

Dr. Delany provided a hint of how he viewed the central office school improvement initiative. For him, it was a "mechanism," to add to his developed educational arsenal that began to produce educational change, prior to the central office initiative.

EVENT(EVT): It is obvious to me, on the basis of the previous observation data, and my on-going observations of the SIC, that you utilize the Council, the chairperson(s) within the Council, and the individual members, to carry-out leadership functions in an attempt to improve the educational program.

Instructional Leadership Question (ILQ): The SIC is a direct result of the central office initiative, without such an initiative, to what extent do you feel your school would be at the stage it is at now relative to school climate-faculty morale, school planning, etc?

PR: It [the central office initiative] really gave me the mechanism to do what I wanted to do. It gave me the organizational structure to allow me to implement the kind of planning and staff process I wanted to develop, but was unable to do, alone. (Interview #7)

Finally, in the last interview session, which occurred nearly a month after the above expressed views, Dr. Delany maintained the military imagery. In response to meeting faculty resistance, he utilized the generative metaphor of a tank. Consistent with his humanistic mode of behavior, he did not respond that he rolls over the opposition, but instead, "rolls on" - well fortified, leaving the opposition behind.

ILQ: How do you handle faculty resistance?

PR: Oh, I just roll on, just like a tank, and I try to give the impression to others that, "You join me or be left way behind". I continue to be friendly with everyone. I am sincere and caring to those who oppose me. I never write any staff member off... I hope to win over the opposition, and I try. (Interview #10)

Unlike Mr. Stern's use of imagery, and the resulting interpretations with the researcher which tended to be confusing and disorganized, Dr. Delany's metaphoric usage and discussions with the researcher were characterized by clarity and precision. Dr. Delany was never defensive in detailing the recollection of his statements and intended meanings.

Conclusion

The previous discussion of imagery in language, and the interpretations of the metaphors expressed by both principals, served to suggest the persona of the individuals, the impact of the environment on their behaviors and thinking process. In the case of Mr. Stern, a varying degree of disorganization in his interpretations was exhibited. However, the metaphors he expressed seemed to capture the climate, and the regressive impact of the school environment while highlighting its turbulence.

Dr. Delany's clear and precise metaphoric expressions and interpretations seemed to validate the degree of precision and clarity that either exist or are developing at Kennedy Junior High School, and within the principal.

Utilizing the view of Argyris and Schon (1974) concerning espoused-theory and theory-in-use, a theoretical framework was also used to understand the behaviors of the school principals based in part on their metaphoric expressions. In the case of Mr. Robert Stern, principal at Truman Junior High School, the findings suggested that he espoused a knowledgeable theoretical view of instructional leadership practices. However, in practice, i.e., his theory-in-use, he illustrated a disjointedness between what he espoused and what he performed. That Mr. Stern recognized the apparent schism suggested a possibility for self-correction to bring his theory-in-use into conformity with his

espoused views. Mr. Stern often used the phrase, "not enough," perhaps to typify his recognition of the gap between theory and practices in the performance of instructional leadership functions in a low achieving setting.

The term "not enough" may also be viewed as a generative metaphor that suggested Mr. Stern's realization of the overwhelming environmental stress endemic to Truman Junior High School. Although, according to the ability of Mr. Stern to set priorities and stick to them, "not enough" seemed to also apply to the interplay between Mr. Stern's competence and his job performance in a turbulent environment. In addition, Mr. Stern's use of the phrase "not enough," while suggesting a degree of congruency between his espoused-theory and his theory-in-use, also illustrates the disjointedness between theory and practice.

Dr. Delany, principal of Kennedy Junior High School, demonstrated a remarkable consistency between his espoused theory and his theory-in-use. The case study of Dr. Delany illustrated a principal in control and operating as an effective instructional leader in a low achieving setting. The findings suggested that Dr. Delany's effectiveness was, in part, the result of his behaviors which were in consonance with his expressed views.

These two case studies, taken together, suggest that closing the gap between theory and practice, i.e., one's espoused-theory and one's theory-in-use,can produce positive behavioral attributes, and increase the potential for positive school efforts.

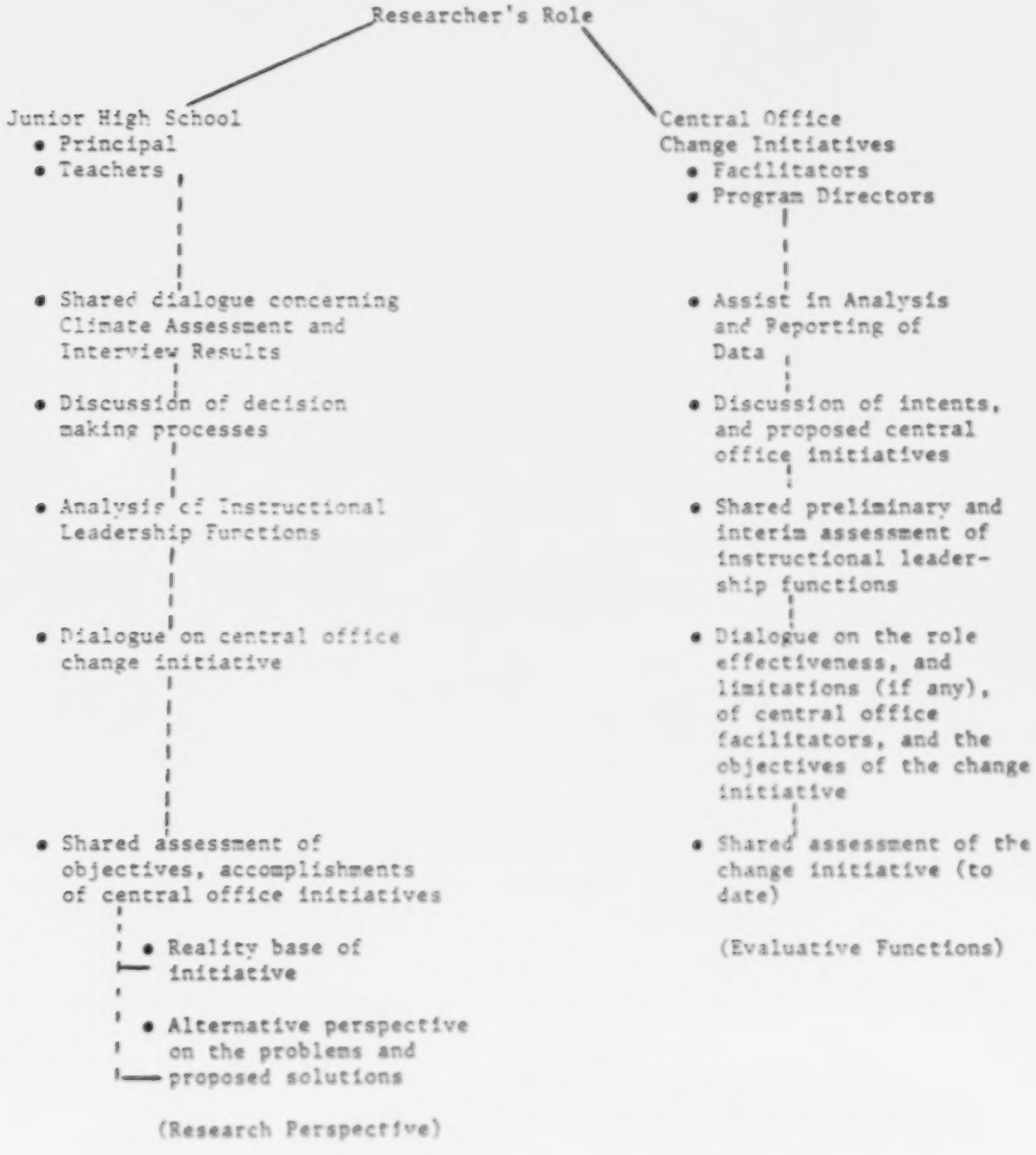
This study also suggests that the interpretation of school principals' metaphoric language is a valuable means of gaining an understanding of school settings, in addition to the status and development of instructional leadership practices. Of importance to any analysis of principals' imagery in language is that the data derive from spontaneously spoken words in a non-defensive atmosphere of cooperation between researcher and the client, i.e., the principal. In such instances, metaphors seem to take on an essence of their own. The aforementioned was accomplished in this study as a result of more than nine months of extensive observations throughout the schools, and entailed shadowing the principals, interviewing school staff, and engaging in an implicit "reflective contract" (Schon, 1983) with the principals.

Action research and the ethnographic perspective were methodologies that served as conduits to promoting trust, respect, and sincere interactive behavior between the researcher and principals. As a consequence of the researcher's dual role of investigator, and project evaluator for the district's school improvement program, increased access to the school settings was made possible. In the capacity of researcher/evaluator, a clear role delineation was established (see attached schematic depiction, Figure 1). In addition, the issue of evaluators' role conflict (Korr, 1982) could not be ignored. Role conflict was minimized by the researcher establishing a clear perspective on his areas of responsibility. The research process was facilitated by the investigator's action research approach which entailed problem-identification, problem-solving, and the evaluation of proposed and tried strategies.

Figure 1.

Researcher's Role Delineation

In order to avoid or minimize role conflict, the following examination and clarification of roles were adhered to:


Researcher's Role
Junior High School
• Principal
• Teachers
• Shared dialogue concerning Climate Assessment and Interview Results
• Discussion of decision making processes
• Analysis of Instructional Leadership Functions
• Dialogue on central office change initiative
• Shared assessment of objectives, accomplishments of central office initiatives
• Reality base of initiative
• Alternative perspective on the problems and proposed solutions
(Research Perspective)
Central Office Change Initiatives
• Facilitators
• Program Directors
• Assist in Analysis and Reporting of Data
• Discussion of intents, and proposed central office initiatives
• Shared preliminary and interim assessment of instructional leadership functions
• Dialogue on the role effectiveness, and limitations (if any), of central office facilitators, and the objectives of the change initiative
• Shared assessment of the change initiative (to date)
(Evaluative Functions)

(Pugh, 1986)

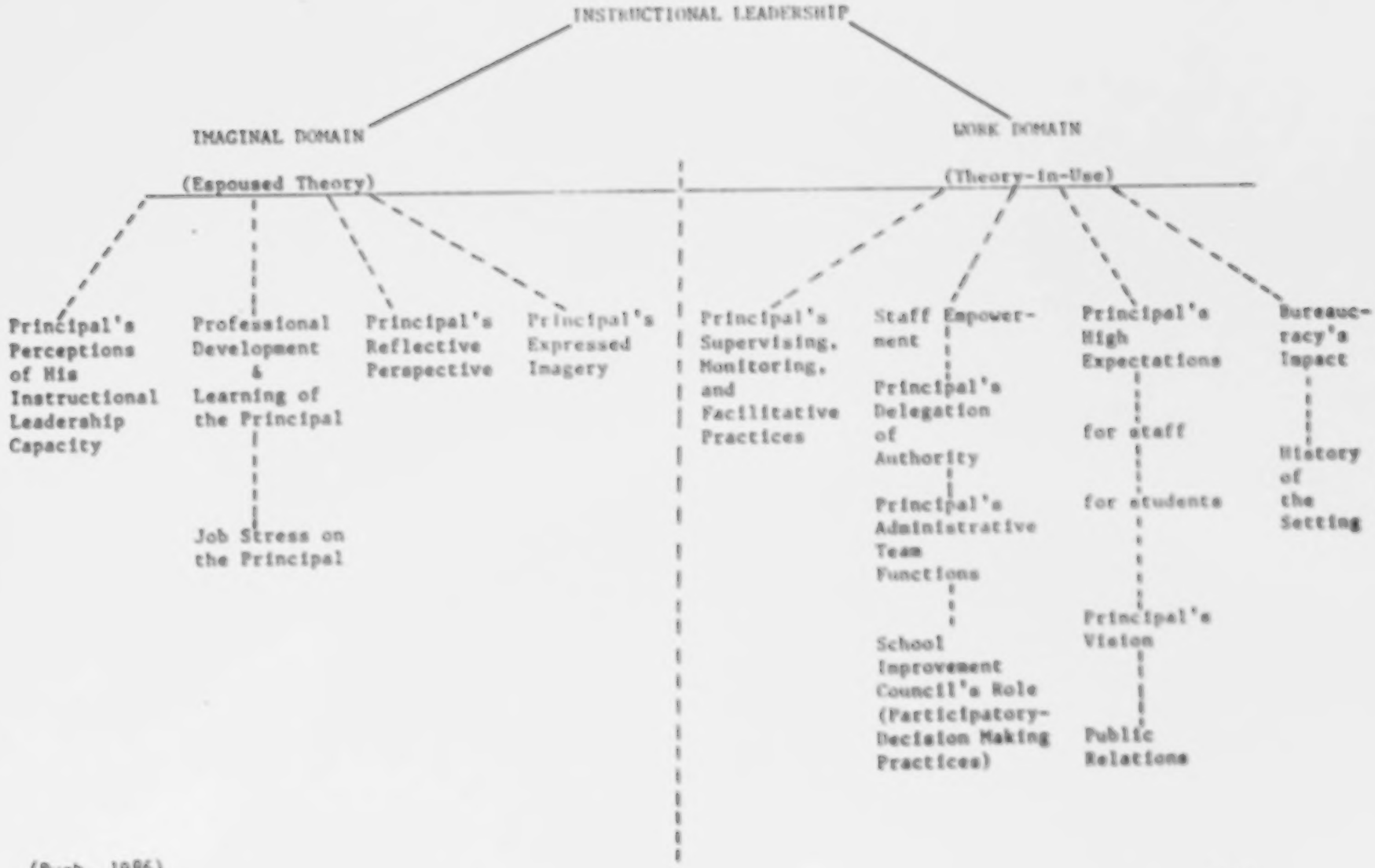
Initially, the principals were able to accept the researcher/evaluator's dual role with a minimum of defensive responses. Later, during the interviews, a cooperative and shared reflective process occurred between the researcher and the principals. The principals became "informants" on the life of an urban school administrator in a low achieving setting.

The study suggests that the interpretation of metaphoric language is a valid form of data analysis, and provides understanding of instructional leadership practices. However, such interpretations must be viewed within a context of multivalent variables, e.g., as suggested and contained within the attached typology of instructional leadership practices (attached, Figure 2; Pugh, 1986).

The implication of this study is that metaphoric interpretation as part of a principal's reflection-in-action may contribute to experiential learning. For practitioners and researchers who work in an environment that entails process evaluation based on cooperation in implementing school improvement initiatives, imagery in language can be insightful in problem-setting and understanding leading to proposed strategies for problem solving.

Figure 2.

A TYPOLOGY OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS



(Pugh, 1986)

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